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ABSTRACT

The contexts and purposes for civic writing may influence the composition process as well as text features, and an analysis of the purposes and audiences for civic writing might yield an insight into the way that such writing stimulates the personal and moral development of both its readers and writers. An examination of two related pieces written by citizens of a small town shows that the first document, the Final Report of the Wareham Charter Commission, created by a citizens' group to devise a new charter for approval by the town's residents in the next election, is a "committed" piece of civic writing, while the second text, one of five recall petitions by a group of angry inhabitants, is more spontaneous. The goals of the charter commission (elected by majority vote) were positive, and the tone is gracious and self-confident. The recall petition, on the other hand, arose from the concerns of a self-selected group, and the tone is one of rage. However, there are important similarities: both texts reflect "group" voice, not individual voice, and both are formally addressed to the Board of Selectmen, although clearly intended for the public. Ultimately, civic or political writing is about power, or the testing of power. (Seventeen reference notes are provided, as well as the texts of the documents examined in this paper.) (NKA)

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# Civic Writing: An Exploratory Study

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In the past two decades, a great deal of research and thinking in the field of composition teaching has been stimulated by two somewhat different theories of writing. One theory, based upon certain views about the nature of creativity, sees the act of writing as a continuous process of "making meaning."[1] The other theory, based upon work in cognitive psychology, sees the act of writing as a process of thinking and problem-solving.[2] Despite these differences, however, both theories seem to assume that the act of writing is primarily an individual search for personal meaning occurring in a private context. Neither theory acknowledges the critical influence of the social context on why and how a writer writes. While some writing, particularly literary or personal writing, might indeed be characterized as a search for personal meaning, most texts, like most works of the human mind, are not independent of the social circumstances in which they are conceived.

The notion that writing is used mainly for discovering or communicating personal meaning ignores the fact that most of the writing we do as adults is called forth by specific circumstances and shaped by specific purposes for specific readers. Writing is usually as much a social act as an individual act of cognition or creativity. The nature of a text a writer creates--its content,

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organization, form, and style--and even the way in which the writer goes about composing it, is largely determined by the occasion for the writing, the purpose and reader for the writing, and the setting in which the text will be read and responded to. Thus, a complete understanding of a piece of writing and of the act of composing it requires an examination of the text's meaning to the particular community of readers for which it was written.[3] Although a case can be made for seeing even classroom writing as functional writing within a particular social context,[4] a social perspective on writing seems unquestionably justified when we seek to understand why and how people write outside an academic context.

In order to see how the social contexts for writing influence both writers and readers, researchers in the field of composition and scholars of rhetoric have recently begun to explore the writing that people do beyond the schools. The first anthology of essays on writing in nonacademic contexts appeared just a few years ago.[5] Entitled Writing in Nonacademic Settings, it addresses the structure and readability of the writing that workers do in professional, industrial, or governmental organizations, the influence of the new technologies on this writing, and some pedagogical implications or applications of this new research and scholarship. Curiously, despite the generality of its title, all fourteen essays in this anthology seem to imply that rhetorical contexts for nonacademic writing occur primarily in the workplace. This is, of course, not the case. Outside the workplace, we can find a great deal of rhetorical writing, and much of it is the writing that citizens do for civic or political purposes.

Unlike writing in the workplace, civic writing is unpaid writing. It is writing that a writer freely chooses to do or voluntarily commits himself to do without remuneration. People may write spontaneously in response to current events or issues, without prompting by a civic or political organization. They

may join also join a civic or political organization and agree to work with others to further the goals of the organization in ways that entail writing. Finally, they may run for public offices or agree to serve as appointed members of public bodies that require writing to other public officials or the public as part of the responsibilities of their positions.

Writing is a far more significant aspect of our civic life than we have hitherto recognized. It is, in fact, an inseparable component of almost all the significant activities in which we engage in order to govern ourselves in a democratic society. Civic writing includes such formal legal writing as speeches, petitions, and resolutions as well as such formal organizational writing as minutes of meetings, agendas, memos, and newsletters for political or civic groups. It also includes a great deal of informal and personal writing, such as letters to friends or neighbors supporting candidates for public office. Civic writing is thus a kind of writing that can be distinguished not by any specific set of language conventions or even literary forms but by its purposes and the contexts for its use. It may also be distinguished by a moral element in the writer's motivation for writing, for civic writing often reflects the use of language as an instrument of conscience.[6]

In view of the role that writing plays in civic or political life, it is puzzling why writing researchers and scholars of rhetoric have focused their attention only on the writing people do inside the academy or in professional occupations. Given the insistence by many in the field of composition teaching and rhetoric that literacy is an instrument of power, one might have expected some exploration of the role that writing plays in the civic process and in the personal and moral development of the writer as citizen. As Kenneth Levine notes: "Writing conveys and records innovation, dissent, and criticism; above all, it can give access to political mechanisms and the political process generally, where many of the possibilities for personal and social transformation

lie."[7] Yet, there seem to be no published studies of the self-initiated or self-committed writing people do for civic purposes--why they do this kind of writing, to whom it is sent, and what specific purposes it serves.[8]

It is also ironic that civic writing has been so neglected by scholars of rhetoric since it is one of the oldest and most honored forms of rhetoric. James Kinneavy, in A Theory of Discourse, describes some of what I refer to as civic writing in a chapter on "expressive" discourse.[9] Unfortunately, this chapter confounds examples of civic discourse, such as declarations of independence or manifestoes, with examples of personal writing, such as journals and diaries. Thus, we miss an inquiry into civic discourse as a meaningful entity in its own right.

Even political scientists have rarely examined how citizens participate in the process of self-government as writers or how writing may facilitate civic involvement or the achievement of civic or political goals. Only a very small literature exists in political science, and it deals mainly with letters to editors on political issues or letters to political leaders.

The present essay is intended as an exploratory study of civic writing. In it, I suggest how the contexts and purposes for civic writing may influence the composing process as well as features of the text. I also suggest how an analysis of the purposes and audiences for civic writing might give us insight into the way in which it stimulates the personal and moral development of both its writers and readers. The purposes for which citizens write, and what specifically they write, affect not only their own personal well-being but the well-being of others. A better understanding of the uses of written civic discourse in a democratic society, and the way in which this discourse is composed, might encourage composition instructors and other educators to pay more attention to enhancing their students' ability to write clearly and coherently about public issues.

For the purposes of this essay, we shall examine two related pieces of non-partisan civic writing written by citizens of a small town in Massachusetts in the past decade. The first is the Final Report of the Wareham Charter Commission, a piece of civic writing that is functionally similar to the Constitution of the United States.[10] This particular report is a fairly representative example of a report by a charter commission, to judge both by a comparison of its provisions with those of other reports,[11] and by a comparison of its features and sections with those of several other charter commission reports.[12] The Report was created by a group of nine citizens who were elected in their annual town election in 1976 to devise a new charter for approval by the town's citizens in the next annual election. The Report is thus a "committed" piece of civic writing.

First, an overview of the sections of the report. The report begins with a cover letter (Figure 1) addressed to the Chairperson of the Board of Selectmen, describing how the report assumed shape and how it will be distributed to the citizens of the town before being voted on. The cover letter indicates that there were "honest differences of opinion" but that "reasonable compromises are a part of good government." It then mentions, towards the end, that a minority report is included in the final report, thus acknowledging that not all honest differences of opinion were resolved for the final report and alerting the reader to the presence of the minority report.

Following a page that shows how a summary of the charter commission's work will be presented as a question on the ballot for the 1977 annual town election, there is a brief introduction to the body of the report (Figure 2). In it, the commission indicates that it does not seek to change the basic structure of local government (as charter commissions sometimes do) in order to make it serve the interests of its citizens better. Instead, it proposes what it describes as modifications in various areas: a few elected offices will become

appointed ones; the process for developing the town budget will be better organized; and the responsibilities of the town's chief administrative officer will be increased. In the introduction are several statements that might seem to reflect mere political rhetoric: "many of our citizens have been left out of our town government," and "[t]his charter is an attempt to...bring the people back into our government process." However, we will see later how meaningful--and prophetic--these statements are.

The body of the report (approximately 19 pages) contains the details for each article in the proposed charter; this section was written with the technical help of a legal consultant. These articles focus on (1) incorporation, the division of powers, and the powers of the town; (2) the legislative branch; (3) elected officers; (4) the town administrator; (5) fiscal procedures; (6) administrative organization; (7) general provisions; and (8) transitional provisions.

At the end of the report is the minority report (Figure 3) submitted by the one member of the charter commission who did not concur with the other members on a major decision they made with respect to the town administrator's responsibilities. From a rhetorical perspective, it is a well-crafted piece of civic discourse. The writer begins by pointing out the qualifications by which other citizens can judge the validity of her minority point of view: her longstanding involvement in civic affairs, her own educational interests, and the amount of time she spent studying issues relating to the task of the charter commission. She then indicates what she finds useful in the charter commission's proposal--details concerning the preparation of the town budget, the additional time given to the Finance Committee and the voters to study articles on the warrant before town meeting, and the procedures for recalling elected officials from office--all of which, she points out, could be accomplished without adoption of the charter. The heart of her report is her explanation of what she finds so

objectionable in the proposed charter--the strengthening of the powers of the town's executive secretary. In her judgment, it might make him a "virtual dictator," and she gives several reasons for her judgment. She concludes the body of her report with an impassioned recommendation to her readers to reject the charter when they vote at the annual town election. Nonetheless, the charter was approved by a majority of the town's voters in their 1977 annual election.

The second civic text we examine (Figure 4), a much more spontaneous piece of writing than the Final Report, is one of five recall petitions written in August 1985 by a group of angry citizens in the town. They had decided to use the procedures specified in the charter adopted in 1977 in order to remove all five members of their board of selectmen. (All five petitions were identically worded except for the spaces containing the name of the selectman and a proposed replacement.) The grounds for recall are spelled out; the selectman involved the town in an unnecessary expense and interfered with the functions of the Board of Appeals; thus, he has failed to serve the interests of the town and has lost the confidence of the citizens to make decisions concerning the town. As in the cover letter and introduction to the charter commission's Final Report, the voice of a body of citizens speaks out. But this time the voice speaks out in rage and seeks by means of this document to remove and replace, all at once, the entire elected body governing the town. And in an election in November 1985, four of the town's five selectmen were recalled from office.

Clearly, the purposes of these two texts and the circumstances leading to their writing differ in important respects. The purpose of the charter commission report was to advocate a new charter, or constitution, for legal approval by a political community. The goals of the charter commission were therefore positive; no critique of the performance of any specific individual was intended. Moreover, the charter commissic report arose from a recognized need for a

new charter; the commission had been elected by majority vote. The recall petition, on the other hand, arose from the concerns of a self-selected group of citizens. Its purpose was to advocate for legal approval by a political community the removal of elected officials from office before their terms of office were over. The petitioners clearly intended a critique of the performance of specific individuals, and their goals were therefore negative, at least in the short run. Although both groups needed to win the support of a majority of the town's citizens to achieve their purposes, one group already knew it had broad support for its activities. These differences in circumstance and purpose affect these two texts in several ways.

First, the texts differ with respect to tone. The Final Report is gracious and self-confident; despite the presence of the minority report, the commission seems to expect approval from the town's citizens. The tone of the recall petition, however, is one of outrage. The texts also differ with respect to degree of organization. The Report, because it was carefully planned, is highly organized and follows an order that is useful to its readers. A summary appears directly after the introduction so that citizens impatient of detail can find the gist of the new charter quickly. The minority report appears at the end of the report, after readers have read the complete text and know its provisions. On the other hand, the text of the recall petition, because it was probably written more spontaneously, is less orderly. Although its purpose is stated in the first sentence of the printed form itself, the petitioners have alternated specific and general reasons for seeking the removal of the selectmen in their explanation. Indeed, except for the first statement of the petitioners, the order of material does not seem planned.

On the other hand, there are important similarities between these two documents. Both texts reflect "group" voice, not individual voice. The purposes of these texts legally entailed group discussion or group support; a proposed

charter could not be the work of only one individual; a petition to remove an elected official could not be submitted by only one citizen. For each text, it is possible that one person may have undertaken most of the writing. But the charter had to meet with the approval of a majority of the members of the commission, and the text of the petition had to be agreeable to all the petitioners or they would not have signed their names. While technical legal help was used for specific sections or statements of each text, the other sections or statements advocating and explaining the text's purpose are the citizens'. Moreover, the cover letter for the Final Report affirms the openness of the process that was used to arrive at the final draft and assures the public that diverse points of view were incorporated.

Another similarity to note is that both texts are formally addressed to the Board of Selectmen, although both are clearly intended for the public. Thus, each text has a formal audience that differs from its substantive audience. The presence of the formal audience indicates the procedural courtesies that citizens must often use to bring their purposes into the public eye. In the case of the recall petition, there is irony in the formal address to the Board of Selectmen; it is directed to the very people that the citizens wish to remove from office. Nevertheless, this formality points out a common feature of civic writing; it is addressed writing--at least one audience has an identity. The audience may be a person or a body, but it has a specific identity.

What can an analysis of the purposes and readers for these texts tell us about our civic process? Ultimately, civic or political writing is about power, or the testing of power. It tells us what citizens may do, or what they do do even if they are not allowed to do it. It also tells us about the distribution of power--who may help these citizens achieve their purposes. We can learn a great deal about the uses of civic discourse in a society if we des-

cribe its various purposes and audiences in civic or political terms, i.e., according to the context for its use. Clearly, we could describe the purposes of civic writing from the perspective of current discourse theory. If we conceptualized purpose as an aim of discourse according to Kinneavy's definition of aim, we would probably label these two civic texts as examples of "expressive" writing. If we conceptualized purpose as a function of language according to the classification proposed by James Britton and his associates, we would probably label these texts as examples of "conative transactional" writing.[13] But neither of these labels would provide us with useful information about the social significance of this writing. On the other hand, by formulating the purposes of these texts in precise civic or political terms, as we have done above, we call attention both to what citizens may advocate legally and to the fact that advocacy writing is allowed. It is useful to learn not only <u>that</u> advocacy writing is legally permissible but also <u>what</u>, specifically, citizens may advocate in our society, as there may be restrictions in other societies as to what citizens may legally advocate in writing, if in fact they can advocate anything at all. Moreover, there are other kinds of civic discourse in our society,[14] and we need to differentiate among them to gain a clear understanding of the different uses of language for civic or political purposes in a society.

We gain further insight into the social significance of a piece of civic writing if we also conceptualize its audience from a civic or political perspective. Clearly, one could investigate the nature of the audience of any text by analyzing, from a traditional rhetorical perspective, what its writer seems to have thought about the reader's beliefs and attitudes; or, from the point of view of information processing theory, its readability; or, from a cognitive developmental theory, what the writer has assumed the reader does or does not know.[15] Moreover, one could conceptualize audiences as known or unknown, as Britton and his associates do. However, to understand the social

meaning of the audience for a piece of civic writing, we need to examine the social relationship between the writer(s) and the reader(s). As Douglas Park points out in an essay on analyzing audiences, a knowledge of the social relationships between writers and their readers constitutes part of the essential foundation for audience analysis.[16] For civic writing, readers may be public (or private) officials, or those in a superordinate position. Or they may be other citizens, or those equal in status to the writers of the text. A civic text will be addressed primarily to those readers who have the power to respond meaningfully to the writer's request. By determining whether the intended readers of a civic text are citizens or public officials, we learn about the distribution of political power in a community.

In the case of the charter commission report and the recall petition, the fact that both were directed not to public officials but to the citizens of the town tells us that the latter were the locus of power for helping the writers of these texts achieve their specific civic purposes. The Final Report was, in fact, sent directly to every household in the town. Moreover, summaries of both the recall petitions and the charter appeared as ballot questions for all citizens to vote on at town election. Thus, both texts, because of their particular purposes and the nature of their audience, provide striking evidence of the meaningfulness and vitality of the concept of democratic self-government.

An analysis of the purposes and audiences for civic writing from a civic or political perspective also helps us to understand how this writing may enhance the writer's sense of civic and moral worth. To begin with, we need to note that specific legal procedures have been provided in many states allowing citizens to propose innovations in the political structure and procedures of their local government and to remove certain elected public officials from office before their term of office is over. The very existence of a charter commission report and a recall petition attests to a belief that ordinary citizens

are capable of redesigning the structure and procedures of their local government and of making judgments about the competence of their public officials--subject, of course, to the final approval of the entire political community. By participating as a member of a group in composing a civic text such as a constitution or a recall petition, people may become aware of the power and the responsibility they have as citizens in shaping the institutions that structure civic life. Such participation may easily enhance the writers' self-esteem, especially if the writers' objectives are approved by their peers.

We also need to observe that minority reports are published together with the report or recommendations of the majority in civic documents. Political dissent is not only not repressed or simply tolerated, it is visibly publicized. The presentation of an opposing point of view in a formal document intended to persuade citizens to a particular course of action implies that the ability of ordinary citizens to make decisions may be strengthened, not weakened, by an awareness and understanding of opposing views. One might thus conjecture that a requirement of unanimity or consensus for an official body's recommendations could even be detrimental to the education of public opinion. In fact, one might even say that the publication of a statement of dissent together with the statement of the majority position serves as a way to educate public opinion and to encourage citizens to value their personal integrity and their unique points of view.

Such an interpretation is suggested by the minority report in Figure 1. In it, we find an insistence by the writer on her moral autonomy and an expectation that others would want her to articulate her civic conscience. She clearly has no fear of higher authority, her colleagues, or public opinion for dissenting from the collective judgment of her colleagues. To the contrary, she believes her fellow citizens will approve of her decision to state her principles and defend her stance. While her writing serves overtly as the most ef-

fective way she could find to communicate to her fellow citizens the dangers she sees in the proposed charter, it is, at a deeper level, a means for fulfilling her own personal values and for communicating to others the worth of her own integrity. Thus, it is possible that by participating in the creation of a civic document in which the expression of dissent is formally respected, citizens may come to value their own or others' personal and moral autonomy.

Concluding Remarks

This essay represents an initial inquiry into a particular context for writing that has so far been ignored by writing teachers and researchers. In this essay, I have suggested how the contexts and purposes for civic writing may influence the writing of civic texts. I have also suggested how an analysis of the purposes and audiences for civic writing from a civic or political perspective can help us understand its social and personal significance. If we wish to understand better all the implications of civic writing, there are many questions that could be explored. For example, what impels citizens to commit themselves as writers? Why in some situations but not in others? What sustains the individual writer who does not write as a member of a group? We clearly need to know more about the phenomenon of group voice. We seem to know almost nothing about the way in which group voice is achieved for a civic text; yet, the process of achieving group voice for a civic text is as important as the text itself in its ultimate effectiveness. More comprehensive studies of the purposes and audiences for civic writing and of the process by which civic texts come into being in our society may clarify the role that writing plays in helping people to develop or maintain democratic institutions. Such studies may also stimulate educators to make greater efforts to prepare their students for their "essential public, civic function." [17]

Acknowledgement

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References

[1]See, for example, Ann Berthoff, Forming, Thinking, and Writing: The Composing Imagination (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1978).

[2]See, for example, John Hayes and Linda Flower, "Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes" and Linda Flower and John Hayes, "The Dynamics of Composing: Making Plans and Juggling Constraints," in Cognitive Processes in Writing, ed. Lee W. Gregg and Erwin R. Steinberg (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1980).

[3]In "Nonacademic Writing: The Social Perspective," in Writing in Nonacademic Settings, ed. Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), Lester Faigley strongly advocates a social perspective for writing research, suggesting that writing should be viewed both as a process of thinking and as a way of using language that is shaped by the specific social contexts in which the writer writes.

[4]Les Perelman, "The Context of Classroom Writing," College English, 48 (September 1986), 471-479.

[5]Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami, eds., Writing in Nonacademic Settings (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

[6]I owe this phrase to Israel Scheffler. Personal communication, October 1985.

[7]Kenneth Levine, "Functional Literacy: Fond Illusions and False Economies," Harvard Educational Review, 52, 249-266. The quotation is from p. 262.

[8]The only relevant study I have been able to locate is an unpublished study by Lisa Ede, entitled "Public Discourse and Public Policy: A Case Study,"

1983.

[9]James Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse (W.W. Norton & Co., 1980; originally published 1971 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.).

[10]Final Report of the Wareham Charter Commission, Town of Wareham, Massachusetts, 1977. In Massachusetts, there are no qualifications for membership on a charter commission; any citizen is eligible to run for a position on the commission. By law, a charter commission's report--its final recommendations for a new charter--must be presented to the other citizens of the municipality or county within a specified period of time. It must also be summarized as a ballot question and voted upon at the next local election.

[11]These provisions are outlined in Summary of Home Rule Charter Provisions in Massachusetts (Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development: Division of Community Services, 1982).

[12]For example, the Final Report of the Natick Charter Commission, Natick, Massachusetts, 1980 or the Final Report of the Winchester Charter Commission, Winchester, Massachusetts 1975.

[13]James Britton, Tony Burgess, Nancy Martin, Alex McLeod, and Harold Rosen in The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) (Schools Council Research Studies, London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1976) locate instructions, orders, advice, and persuasion in a category they label conative transactional writing.

[14]A taxonomy of purposes for civic writing may be found in Sandra Stotsky, Civic Writing: The Citizen as Writer, work in progress. In brief, citizens may write to advocate a cause, to evaluate a service, to offer a service, to obtain a service, or to express civic bonds.

[15]In "Writers for Readers: Three Perspectives on Audience," (College Composition and Communication, 35, May 1984) Barry Kroll identifies and describes three general perspectives on audience: one is the traditional rhetorical perspective, a second views readers as information processers, and a third views

readers from the perspective of how decentered the writer is in his or her thinking.

[16]Douglas Park, "Analyzing Audiences," College Composition and Communication, 37, 478-488.

[17]R. Freeman Butts, "The Revival of Civic Learning Requires a Prescribed Curriculum," Liberal Education, 1982, 68, 4, 377-401.

FIGURE 1

**WAREHAM CHARTER COMMISSION**
**Town Hall**
**Wareham, Massachusetts 02571**

January 25, 1977

Claire McWilliams, Chairman
Wareham Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
Wareham, MA 02571

Dear Mrs. McWilliams:

The Wareham Charter Commission is pleased to present its final report to the Wareham Board of Selectmen tonight, in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 43B, Section 9.

The preliminary draft of the Proposed Charter has been approved by Francis X. Bellotti, Attorney General of the Commonwealth, except for one paragraph that has not been included in the final report. A copy of this report has also been forwarded to Town Counsel, Joseph Grassia.

It has been ten months since we were elected to this office, and the Commission feels that the Board of Selectmen, as the governing body of this Town, is entitled to know how we arrived at this final product.

The Commission is proud of its performance since its election last March. Meetings were held on the average of at least once a week and overall attendance was excellent. What is generally not known is that Commission members spent countless hours of their own time, between meetings, speaking to various Town organizations and doing a vast amount of reading and "homework."

All points of view have been presented to the Commission. We have heard from elected Town Meeting members, town administrative officials, part-time Selectmen, full-time Selectmen, educators, various elected officials, and ordinary citizens of the Town. Members of Wareham's Board of Selectmen have appeared before us on at least three separate occasions, during the Spring, Fall and Winter, and all members have expressed their opinions either personally or in writing at one time or another. We want to thank you for your cooperation and advice.

There were honest differences of opinion among the members of the Commission. Each member had different ideas. It is also a fact that the Commission members changed their minds from time to time before adopting this final report.

Reasonable compromises are a part of good government, and although every Commission member had different ideas, they showed a remarkable spirit of cooperation and flexibility in arriving at the final report by a vitually unanimous vote. We are pleased that any preconceived ideas that any Commission member may have had in the beginning gave way to a final report that was the result of reasonable compromise.

Most of these changes were completed by the time of the hearing on our preliminary report in December. It was a source of great satisfaction to the Commission that there were no fundamental criticisms of our performances or our report at the hearing, although we did receive many constructive proposals and helpful advice which we acted upon in making the final revisions.

As I mentioned at the outset, Attorney General Bellotti approved our preliminary report, except for one paragraph that has been deleted. We feel this is a great tribute to our consultant, Michael Curran, who has advised more Charter Commissions in the Commonwealth then any other single individual. His guidance was indispensible, and we appreciate the Board of Selectmen's support for the town meeting appropriation that made his services possible.

The appropriation for the Charter Commission also included a sum of money for publication, and the Commission is now in the process of obtaining cost estimates for publishing our report. The Commission will then proceed with the publication, which will include this attractive cover designed by Mary Jane Pillsbury, a Wareham artist who donated her services. The printed copies will be delivered to the Selectmen for distribution to every Wareham household. The unencumbered balance in our account, for publication and delivery, is now $3,237.00.

The final report includes a minority report. Two alternative reports were presented to the Commission by the dissenting member, but the report of her choice was accepted by the Commission.

Every member of the Board of Selectmen and The Charter Commission, both in and out of this room, has worked toward the creation of a Charter to improve our Town government. Although there have been differences of opinion as to the precise contents of the proposed Charter, we have all agreed that the effort should be made and that the voters should have an opportunity either to accept or reject a Town Charter. They will soon have this opportunity, and we thank everyone that has had a role in making this opportunity possible for the Town of Wareham.

WAREHAM CHARTER COMMISSION
By:

George C. Decas, Chairman
Edward Tamagini, Vice-Chairman
Robert A. Collins
Charles S. Gleason, M.D.
Helen Palmer Lincoln
Phyllis A. McGraw
Waldo N. Roby
George F. Taber
Dissenting Member:
Elizabeth M. Carmichael

FIGURE 2

## INTRODUCTION

The final report of the Wareham Charter Commission represents many months of work by nine commission members elected by you on the Town ballot last year. We have met on the average of at least once a week, and have held a number of public hearings. We have heard from our town officials as well as those from other towns in the commonwealth. We have studied other town charters, and we have had the assistance of a professional consultant, Attorney Michael P. Curran, in drafting this report.

It is the Commission's hope that you will read its report from beginning to end. At the very least, however, we certainly hope that you will read the summary of our report, which follows this introduction.

The question of whether to adopt or to reject the proposed charter will appear on the town ballot at this coming town election. The full text of the proposed charter will not appear on the ballot, nor will the summary included in this report. It is therefore important that you read the full text of the charter or the detailed summary of it which follows.

The commission members believe that changes in our town government are urgently needed in order to get our town government working more efficiently. We are no longer a town of a few thousand voters, and many of our citizens have been left out of our town government. This charter is an attempt to modernize town government, give it professional guidance with a qualified town administrator, and bring the people back into our government process.

### Statement of Major Differences

The most significant difference between the charter which is proposed to you in this report and our "existing charter" is in the structure of the document itself. Our present "existing charter" consists of a hodge-podge of laws enacted by the state government and which apply to Wareham because they are general laws, or because they are so-called acceptance statutes (which the Town has accepted) or because they are special laws which were enacted particularly for Wareham. The proposed charter, without changing the basic structure of the town, will provide a single, simple to read document.

The open town meeting as the legislative body of the town is retained. The board of selectmen, as the pivot point around which general government administration revolves, is retained but in a more positive role. Most officers now chosen by election will continue to be elected, with a few exceptions which will be discussed below. A new and more comprehensive system for budget development and review is to be substituted for the present informal system which lacks cohesiveness and direction. A flexible system for administrative organization and re-organization is provided, to permit the administrative structure to respond to changing times and changing needs. The position of executive secretary has been modified in such a way as to make the new office of town administrator more valuable as a device to improve the level of services delivered to our citizens and to reduce the cost at which they are delivered. A more detailed summary of each article follows.



FIGURE 3

## WAREHAM CHARTER COMMISSION
## WAREHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

## MINORITY REPORT

submitted by:
ELIZABETH M. CARMICHAEL
10 JANUARY 1977

I, Elizabeth M. Carmichael, am the minority member of the Wareham Charter Commission, and this is my minority report.

I was elected by you, the voters of Wareham, to serve as a member of your Charter Commission. I believe that those who voted for me, would have expected me to be "myself" at all times and not to "go along with" or support change just because other members of the Charter Commission were doing so. I can not support what I do not believe to be in the best interest of the Town of Wareham.

My interest and my support of good, effective, efficient, and viable local government is of long standing. I did not come to serve as a member of this commission unacquainted with the structure of our Town's government and the way in which it has functioned. I have served the Town of Wareham in a number of capacities as a member of various boards, commissions, and committees. I have been involved in discussion, debate, and determination of many issues affecting our Town over a long period of time. I have attended Cape Cod Community College towards my degree in local and state government. I believe my background, experience, and education have given me a frame of reference in which to judge, to evaluate, and to choose among several alternative courses of action which were available but not considered by the Charter Commission, for the future structure of Wareham's government.

In addition to attending virtually all of the Charter Commission meetings, I spent, on the average, fifteen hours each week in outside research and study.

I wish I could say all of this time and effort was well spent, and that I could recommend you, my fellow citizens, adopt the charter. Regretfully, I cannot. In my judgment adoption of this proposal would be a negative rather than a positive act for the good of the town. It would represent a step backward rather than forward.

I am pleased that I participated in the weekly deliberations of the Charter Commission, because many ideas I fought for are included in the Charter. I would specifically point to much of the material in article 5, regarding town budgets. I believe that giving the Finance Committee more time to consider warrant articles can only be a positive force. The publication of information to the voters well in advance before they are to act on them can serve only as another step forward. These same provisions, however, can be gained by a vote at town meeting. We do not have to accept the charter to move forward in this area, to improve our town government.

I am also pleased that a provision to recall our elected officials who have lost the confidence of the voters has been included. But may I say here that

this provision can be added without adoption of this charter, through placing a referendum question on the ballot.

My disagreement with the other members of the Charter Commission centers on article 4, the town administrator. In my judgment this article in the form in which it is written, will separate the citizens of Wareham from their government. No longer will the people have a direct say on who runs the town, and how it is run. The powers the Charter would give to the administrator are tremendous - he would be a virtual dictator! The only power our elected selectmen would have over him, if they disagree or disapprove of the way he is performing his duties, would be to fire him. This could not only put the town in a state of constant turmoil, but could also be quite costly. If the selectmen saw fit to discharge him, this charter proposal could cost the taxpayers forty-five days pay after his dismissal, and could exceed up to three months. In the meantime, according to this charter proposal, the selectmen would have to either appoint a temporary administrator or hire another one, whichever comes first. This could cost the taxpayers double the amount.

I have spent a considerable amount of my own time examining and evaluating this most important aspect of our town government structure. I have interviewed our own Selectmen, I have looked closely at the governmental structure of our sister town of Bourne; I listened to many intelligent, knowledgeable guest speakers from many different facets of government, all of whom have been involved in one form or another for a great length of time. After both listening about and studying many different types of government, I feel very strongly in favor of primarily a Mayor-Council form, while retaining town meeting. There is no place in the Statute, or the Home Rule Amendment, which states this form is not allowed to be adopted. My second choice would be full time selectmen. Both of these forms of government would be answerable only to the people who elected them.

Daniel Webster, the eminent United States Senator from Massachusetts, said, in 1830, "The people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." I ask you: If this proposed charter is adopted will it be the people's government? I say that it will not. It will be presided over by an outsider brought into Wareham, without any knowledge of our town, its traditions, or its people. This outsider will not be responsible to you, or to me. It will be the same as our Executive Secretary form has been, but with far greater powers. Remember, we tried not once but twice with this form of government; both men who have held the position had great credentials, but neither have been able to carry out the duties of the office successfully, regardless of their individual skills.

I am gravely concerned with changes that could be made in our town's governmental structure by the procedures proposed in article 6. The extensive powers given to the administrator could become even more dictatorial and dangerous with the provisions of this article. An individual who is brought in from another town to serve as administrator could also wind up making appointments to various town boards and committees, as well as hiring and firing of the various town employees. This person, who would most likely not know where East Wareham ends and West Wareham begins, would be without personal knowledge of individual qualifications, or lack of same, of potential appointees. Therefore, I cannot for the life of me understand how members of the Charter Commission could possibly expect this administrator to know who the best people would be to serve on town boards; this could potentially cause serious detrimental appointments for the safety and well-being of all the townspeople.





I would like to say that if you adopt this charter, you cannot change your main structure of government for at least three years, and only through another charter process. This would mean another Charter Commission which would in turn mean you would live with this government for at least four years. That is a long time to live with a nightmare. I know, because the people of Wareham have had this nightmare for the past five years, and will be glad to see it end one day. Be very careful when you vote at the 1977 Annual Town Elections and, for the good of the Town, vote NO on the question of adopting this charter being presented to you.

To all of you who voted for me last year, thank you for your trust. I have tried, in every way within my power and my capabilities, to represent, at all times, the whole town. At no time did I consciously act in the interest of less than what I perceived to be the interest of the majority.

This opportunity to serve my Town has been rewarding. I have learned a great deal. The lesson I learned the best, however, is how lonely it can be to stand alone for principles in which you believe. In doing so, however, I can face anyone in Wareham with my head held high, completely free of any guilt or misconduct. I look forward to serving my Town again in future capacities, because I love the Town of Wareham, and the people who live in it.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth M. Carmichael
Wareham Charter Commission
(Minority Member)

# FIGURE 4

(Registrars of Voters check ✓thus against the name of each qualified voter to be certified)

PETITION FOR RE-CALL AND REMOVAL OF AN OFFICER OF THE TOWN OF WAREHAM.

In accordance with provisions of the Wareham Town Charter Article 7, Section 7-10

o the Board of Selectmen,
'areham, Mass.

'entlemen:

Respectfully represents the undersigned that they are residents and qualified voters of the Town of Wareham, and we

hereby request the removal from office of .....Lionel J. Lacasse.....

The office which said ✓Lionel J. Lacasse occupies is that of Selectman

Grounds for removal as stated in the affidavit heretofore filed in accordance with Wareham Town Charter Article 7, Section 7-10 as

follows:

Herbert H. Chaston, Jr.
Donald L. Carlson
Jane Beaton
James R. Galvin
Timothy C. Evans
Sally O. Seeley
Cindy L. Norcross

John Lewis Plaines, Jr.
John W. Smith, Jr.
Pamela L. Smith
W. Stuart King, Jr.
Lesley M. Renwans
Parker B. Hayward
Betty Hayward

David W. Norcross, Jr.
Charles Gleason
Kim Carman
Barbara M. Lacasse
Roy A. Hanson
Robert B. Cummings
Kathleen M. Cummings
Michael F. Bassey

Anthony F. Bongarzone
Cheryl A. Ritchie
Robert B. Ritchie
Clifton H. Wade, Jr.
Carmen P. Wade
Doris J. Robbins
Patricia A. Evans
Elizabeth A. Bassey

on the following grounds:

that the said Lionel J. Lacasse has by conduct on May 28, 1985 instructed the town counsel to file suit on behalf of the Town of Wareham, said case being Town of Wareham vs. Lester Johnson, Trustee, Village Hall Realty Trust, Plymouth Superior Court No. 85-21730, when the said Lionel J. Lacasse knew or ought to have known that said suit was baseless and incurred substantial unnecessary legal expense for the Town of Wareham.

that Lionel J. Lacasse has not been responsive to the desires of the citizens of the Town of Wareham.

that Lionel J. Lacasse, in violation of the provisions of Article 3, section 3-2(b) of the Wareham Home Rule Charter has by conduct individually and by acting in concert with other members of the Board of Selectmen attempted to and did in fact involve himself in the day to day administration of the affairs of the town by continually interferring with the functions of the Board of Appeals and other such activities.

that Lionel J. Lacasse has by conduct failed to serve the best interests of the Town of Wareham.

that Lionel J. Lacasse has lost the credibility necessary to make decisions affecting the welfare of the citizens of the Town of Wareham.

that Lionel J. Lacasse, by his conduct, has lost the confidence of a large number of citizens of Wareham in the credibility of his performance as a selectman.

and we hereby demand the election of a successor to such office.

Name of person to whom issued ..Herbert H. Chaston, Jr.

Number of blanks so issued ..400

Date ..August 13, 1985

Jay K. Montague
Signature of Town Clerk.
(SEAL)

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